Past Pursuits

A Newsletter of the Special Collections Division Akron-Summit County Public Library

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Henry Schwartz operated the Family Liquor Store from 1889 until 1919. Here, in his home at 45 North Highland Avenue, he celebrates the end of Prohibition with brandy bottled in 1911. Akron Beacon Journal*, December 6, 1933.*

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Prohibition in Summit County

by Jane Gramlich, Librarian

Ohio had a head start on Prohibition. On May 27, 1919, months before the rest of the U.S., the state began enforcing its own ban on the manufacturing and sale of liquor. The early lead seemed to go nearly unnoticed locally; neither the *Akron Beacon Journal* nor the *Akron Evening Times* carried a headline proclaiming the ban that day. That honor went to a first trans-Atlantic flight by the NC-4 naval aircraft, surely a more captivating topic. Yet among stories of plans for the new county tuberculosis hospital and dry weather favorable to the corn crop, a small scoop appeared near the bottom of the *Beacon*'s front page: "Arrest 49 Drunks on Last Wet Day." Over the next fourteen years, Prohibition garnered plenty of attention. The papers abounded with editorials, articles, and cartoons giving us fascinating glimpses of life under the Eighteenth Amendment in Akron and Summit County—sometimes contentious, sometimes inspiring, and from the vantage point of a century later, often surprisingly humorous.

Though raids on illegal distilleries had been in the news before Prohibition, they increased significantly during the 1920s. One of the earliest raids of the era occurred in December 1919 near Steels Corners. It yielded 500 gallons of liquor including raisin brandy and prune cordial as well as "a truck load of stills, copper coils, heating apparatuses, one ton of mash and 10 men." One of them asked why the raid couldn't have been postponed until January because plenty of people would be disappointed in unfilled orders for holiday tipple. All that lucrative business "has gone blooey now," he lamented. The following years brought news of raids near Silver Lake, Copley, Kenmore, and many within Akron city limits including one in a "fashionable West Hill home" in 1928. Perhaps the height of journalistic absurdity came in 1929 when a still raid on a poultry farm was dubbed "Fowl Enterprise."

Debate over the law was ongoing. Some of the earliest articles pounced on the immediate positive effects of decreased disorder and quiet nights at the

county jail. By mid-decade, however, some of the sentiment had turned the other direction. In 1925, Judge Lionel S. Pardee spoke against Prohibition at a Lions Club meeting, giving the common argument that it was causing increased manufacturing and sales, not the opposite. "An entire army could not control the situation," he said. In 1928, Oklahoma evangelist Arthur Long visited the First Church of Christ in Barberton, addressing the question "shall booze come back?" In a letter to the editor four days later a woman calling herself "Interested Mother" replied, "when was it ever taken away?"

One significant result of the law was the shrewd response of Akron's breweries, which certainly expected to collapse if they didn't implement a major change. The industry as a whole saw it coming, and local companies acted quickly by manufacturing new legal beverages appropriate to the times—"near beer" with an alcohol level of less than 0.5%, beer that was completely alcohol-free, and soft drinks. If there had been any attention given to Ohio's ban in the newspapers of late May 1919, it came from Renner Brewery, which ran a large ad hawking a new "Grossvater" beer stripped of alcohol but "brewed just the same." They later offered Zepp, a "light alcoholic beer brewed for the most particular people." In 1920, the Burkhardt Company announced a line of soft drinks with names like "Orange Dee-Light" and "Partay (a very fine cola drink)." When Prohibition ended on December 5, 1933, Burkhardt was several steps ahead. The company announced in mid-November that for weeks it had been remodeling, acquiring modern brewing equipment, and already making a new kind of beer. The reader was left to guess what that meant, but the implication was clear.

OLD TAVERN BREW
WHIZ
(Grape Flavor)
OUR CLUB GINGER ALE
- HIRES ROOT BEER
WHISTLE
(Orange Flavor)
WHITE ROCK WATER
Order a Sampler Case and try these popular drinks at home. We want you to know how good they really are. The finest bottled beverages available in Akron today are made, bottled and distributed by Burkhardt. To prove this to you, they are put up in this assorted case of 24 bottles of six different flavors with an attractive folder giving recipes with many delicious mixed drinks. To let you try them out and see which you like best, we offer to deliver one of these sampler cases, on order, to a family. Price is $3.00 with rebate of $1.00 on return of bottles. Phone your order today. Then you'll want to keep some of them on the ice all the time for your family and friends.
THE BURKHARDT CONSOLIDATED COMPANY
BURKHARDT'S BOTTLED BEVERAGE SAMPLER CASE
Main 44
See OUR Window at CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Burkhardt Company developed a variety of soft drinks during Prohibition, including the orange-flavored "Whistle" and the grape-flavored "Whiz." Akron Beacon Journal*, June 17, 1926.*

The 1920s brought a sea change in popular culture with new forms of nightlife and entertainment leading to different vocabulary describing them. In the *Beacon*, use of the word "saloon" reached a peak around 1911 and slowly declined afterward. By 1932, some residents thought it wasn't even certain what the word meant. "Definition of 'Saloon' is Difficult Task," claimed one article. Yet the cultural connotation was apparent. A saloon was a dingy, unsavory relic of the past in contrast to a lively Jazz Age nightclub. After repeal, an establishment like this could describe itself as the much more refined "cocktail lounge." Locally, this phrase seems to have made its first appearance around 1934, with reports of the Akron City Club renovating its women's rooms. Warding off accusations of being behind the times, the club announced that one of those rooms would be a cocktail lounge. By late 1935, the M. O'Neil Company advertised "cocktail lounge fashions" clearly geared toward women on the upper rungs of the economic ladder, suggesting that the revived culture of social drinking was not only acceptable but also decidedly sophisticated. Ironically, though women's temperance groups had been a driving force behind Prohibition, in a more subtle way women also helped turn it on its head. In just two short years, it was evident that Summit County, in step with the rest of the nation, had kicked Prohibition out the back door.

O'Neil's ad for upscale "cocktail lounge fashions." Akron Beacon Journal*, November 4, 1935.*

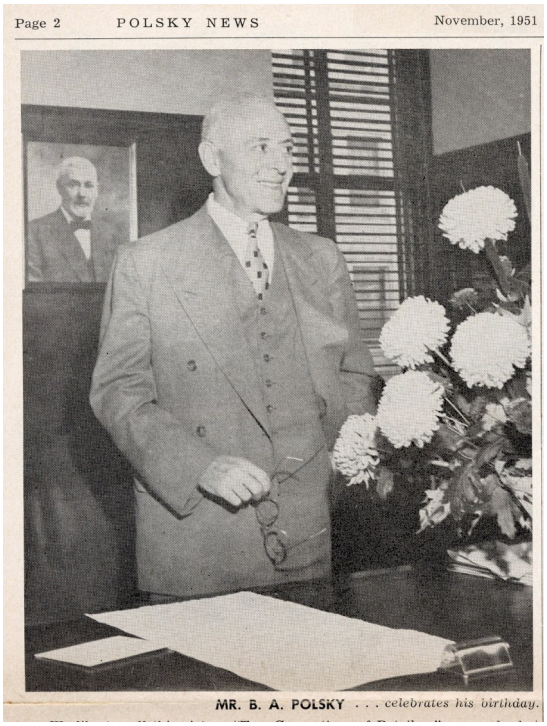
Portrait of Bert Polsky from the Pockrandt Photograph Collection, courtesy of the Summit County Historical Society.

Getting to Know...Bert Polsky

by Cheri Goldner, Librarian

Bert Alfred Polsky was born to Abram and Mollie (Block) Polsky in Orwell, Ashtabula County, Ohio on November 1, 1881. The family moved to Akron in 1885, and Polsky attended Akron public schools and then Buchtel College, where he had plans of becoming a writer. Those plans changed after he met Hazel M. Steiner at a fraternity party. "After I met Hazel," Polsky reportedly said, "I wanted to go to work." He left Buchtel College and took a position as a clerk and messenger at Akron Savings Bank. After the bank crashed in the Panic of 1903, he went to work at the family business, the A. Polsky Co. department store at 165 South Howard Street. On February 17, 1904, he and Hazel married in New York City while he was there on business, "a surprise to their many friends" as the *Akron Beacon Journal* reported the next day. The couple had a son, Thomas, in 1908 and a daughter, Margaret, in 1911 and raised them near family living on the same block of Oakdale Avenue.

As Bert Polsky's family grew, so too did the family business. In 1913, A. Polsky Co. acquired a Main Street location on the "big block" bounded by Mill, Main, Howard, and Market streets. Following their father's death on March 3, 1915, Polsky and his brothers carried on the store and started two new businesses together with brother-in-law Simon Morgenroth. They started the Polsky Building Company in 1918 and promptly built three new family homes on Diagonal Road. Then, in 1928, they formed the Polsky Realty Company before building a new store farther south at Main and State Streets on the site of the "hole in the ground" that had been the intended site of the Franklin Hotel.


Page 2 POLSKY NEWS November, 1951

MR. B. A. POLSKY . . . celebrates his birthday.

A birthday tribute to Bert Polsky, shown standing in front of a portrait of his father, Abram. The Polsky Co. employee newsletter noted that "Mr. Bert [has] emulated the example set by his father...to do nobly...live honorably and make for himself a place of high esteem in the community."

Polsky's devotion extended beyond his family to his employees (many of whom called him "Mr. Bert") and to his community. He was active in a long list of organizations, including the Community Chest (later the United Fund and now United Way), City Hospital, University of Akron, Chamber of Commerce, Akron Community Trust, Beacon Journal Charity Fund, health board, Akron Art Institute, YMCA, YWCA, Boy and Girl Scouts, and Red Cross. After accepting the Lions Club Distinguished Citizen Award in 1951, he explained, "my father came to this country in 1868 to escape the servitude of then Russian-Poland. He appreciated the freedom and liberty he found in this nation as no other man did. His love for this country of ours was handed down to me. That is why I am willing to serve." Eight years later, he won the United Fund's first community service award for "50 years of dedicated concern for community betterment." It is fitting, then, that the Akron Community Foundation's humanitarian award bears his name.

Following Hazel's death on October 12, 1964, Polsky moved from the family home at 675 Diagonal Road into an apartment at 24 South Portage Path. He died February 27, 1970 at the age of 88 and is buried at Rose Hill Burial Park.

Bert A. Polsky Humanitarian Award Collection on Summit Memory

by Rebecca Larson-Troyer, Librarian

Dorothy Jackson, recipient of the 1998 Bert A. Polsky Humanitarian Award, is one of many interviewees offering notable viewpoints of local history.

In 2019, more than 60 hours of video were added to Summit Memory owing to the generosity of David Lieberth and the support of the Akron Community Foundation. In particular, the Bert A. Polsky Humanitarian Award Collection provides a unique addition to Summit Memory through video interviews of 30 past recipients of the award. The interviews, conducted between 1981 and 2019, offer first-person accounts of important events in Akron history from 1945 to present, as well as the personal stories of those recognized for their service to the community. The collection also includes the documentary film *Reinventing Akron: Stories of a Generation* (2001), featuring segments of interviews with Polsky Award recipients, and Tribute to Lisle Buckingham (1988), a video recording of a tribute concert held at the Akron Civic Theatre in honor of Lisle M. T. Buckingham, a 1978 recipient.

The videos in this collection represent a portion of the more than 300 videos donated to Special Collections since 2016 by attorney, civic activist, and former Deputy Mayor of Akron David Lieberth. With financial support from the Akron Community Foundation, older recorded interviews made the journey from Betacam cassette to MP4. ARS Video Inc. of Tallmadge performed digital conversion of the videos, and Joshua Gippin of Joshua Tree Productions edited the videos for publication. Each interview features a brief biography of the recipient and a description of the interview and topics covered. A truly labor intensive and time consuming process, the result is a remarkable collection of memories that spans decades and provides new primary sources to the community's historical record.

David A. Lieberth, 2019 Bert A. Polsky Humanitarian Award Recipient

by Mary Plazo, Division Manager

Presented each year to individuals who show exceptional dedication and commitment to humanitarian causes, the Polsky Award was first received in 1969 by department store chair Bert A. Polsky, who was also a founder of the Akron Community Foundation. David Lieberth, the 52nd recipient of this award, has written and produced the Polsky Award program for almost 30 years. Coincidentally, Lieberth became the youngest board member of the Akron Community Foundation in 1984.

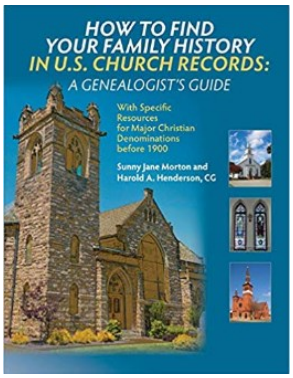
In addition to having a lucrative professional career as a radio broadcaster, a reporter, an attorney, and a deputy mayor, Lieberth has also been one the community's most significant public servants. He has served as a volunteer, chair, or trustee of numerous local organizations and raised substantial amounts of money for many local charities and cultural and civic institutions.

During his time as deputy mayor of Akron from 2002 to 2012, Lieberth had enormous influence on the transformation of downtown Akron, including the creation of Lock 3 on South Main Street as a successful family and entertainment center for the city year-round. He considers one of his biggest achievements to be the negotiation that led to the demolition of the crumbling Canal Park Tower. He was able to oversee the

moving of 150 mentally disabled residents out of that downtown apartment building and into new housing. Lieberth served on the boards and led initiatives for Summit County Children Services and Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority. He chaired the effort that won Akron's designation as "All-American City." He was the first president of the National Inventor's Hall of Fame in Akron. He has won numerous awards from Akron Bar Association, Summit County Chapter of American Red Cross, Society of Professional Journalists, and Salvation Army of Summit County, among many others. He is also one of the founders of Leadership Akron, which has created an award called the Lieberth Community Vision Award. Lieberth has been on the board of Summa Health for 20 years and currently chairs the Community Engagement Committee.

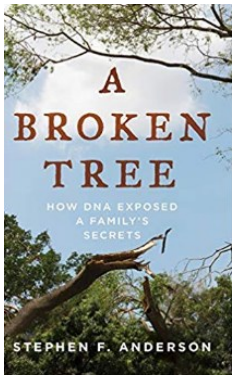
Having written three books and produced two documentaries, Lieberth's expert knowledge of Akron's history is well known, and many recognize him as the foremost advocate for preserving local history. As clear evidence of this, Mayor Dan Horrigan has appointed Lieberth to chair the committee to organize events for Akron's upcoming bicentennial in 2025. Lieberth is also a longtime member and former chair of the Summit County Historical Society, which he first joined as a junior in high school. He was nominated to the board in 1979 and became president in 1982. Under his leadership, the Society raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the restoration of the Perkins Mansion and the John Brown House. Thanks to his efforts and to the Society's current leadership under President & CEO Leianne Neff Heppner, Special Collections is able to hold and preserve the Society's extremely important and irreplaceable collections of photographs and documents.

As one of the most recognized leaders in Summit County, David Lieberth continues to work on local projects and will continue to be an example of a true visionary for future generations.


HOW TO FIND YOUR FAMILY HISTORY IN U.S. CHURCH RECORDS:
A GENEALOGIST'S GUIDE
With Specific Resources for Major Christian Denominations before 1900
Sunny Jane Morton and Harold A. Henderson, CG

New Books

Euclid resident Sunny Jane Morton is a well-known genealogical lecturer, instructor, and author. Her new book *How to Find Your Family History in U.S. Church Records,* co-authored with Harold A. Henderson, CG, discusses finding and using church records in genealogical research and includes in-depth information on records associated with twelve denominations.



In the era of inexpensive DNA testing, more and more genealogical barriers are being cast aside—and facts once cloaked in mystery are now in plain sight. In *A Broken Tree*, Stephen F. Anderson, retired from FamilySearch International, shares his experience unravelling "one extreme example of family secrets gone awry."

For more new books recently added to our collection that can help you with your research, be sure to see the New Books page on our website.

Save the Date: Kelli Bergheimer Program May 9

Join Special Collections on Saturday, May 9, 10:30 am—1 pm for "Organizing Your Genealogy Research" with Kelli Bergheimer. She will present two lectures: "Organization and Citation for Family Historians" and "Family Tree Software Options." Register by phone, in person, or online through the Library's Events Calendar. Check our Classes & Programs page for updated information.

Summit County OGS Events

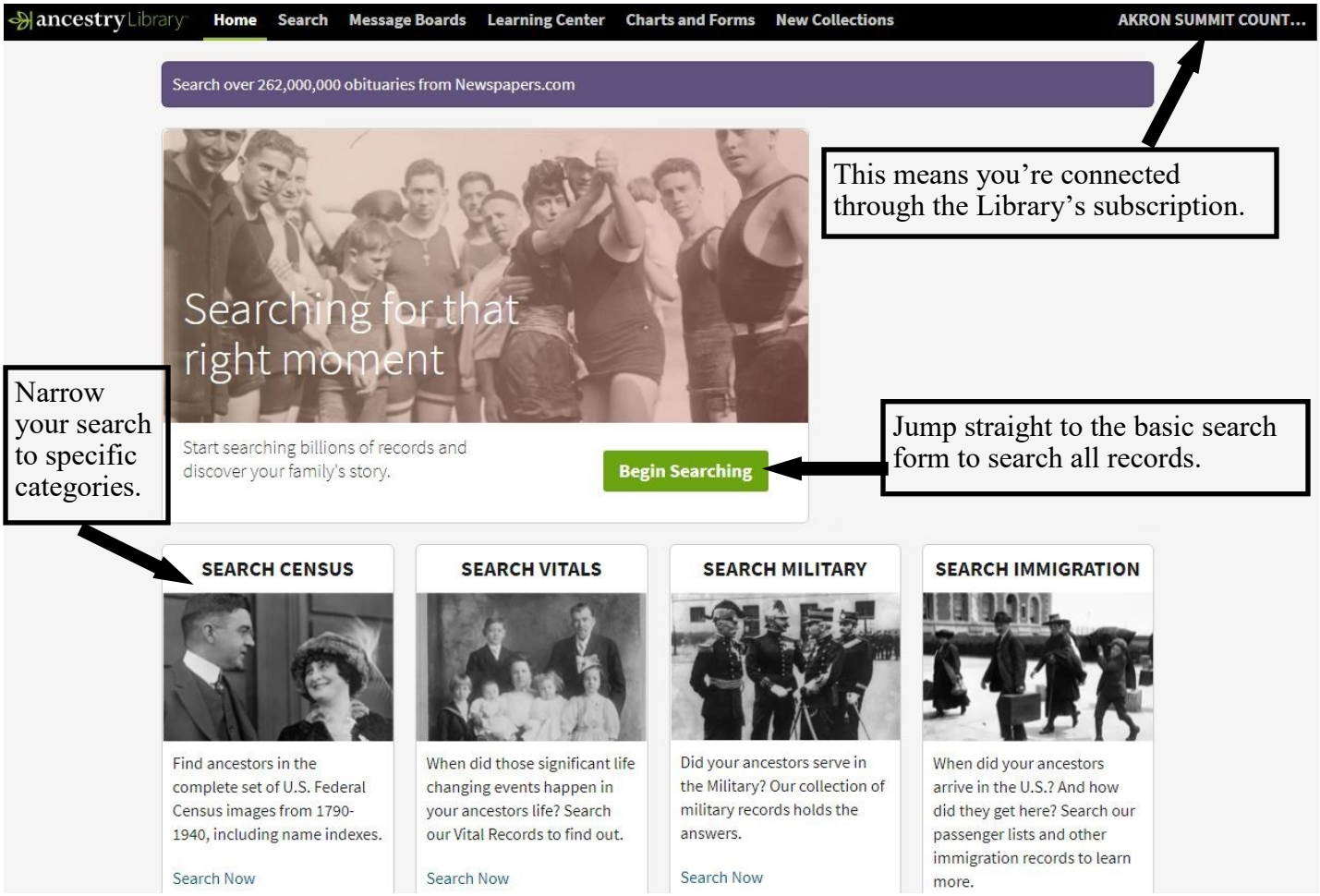
For more information, see http://summitogs.org.

Unpacking a Civil War Pension File
Saturday, January 18
1:30-3:30 pm
Main Library
Our speaker for this presentation will be Special Collections Librarian Jane Gramlich. Civil War pension files can be "packed" with information. Join us and find out how to get the most out of these files.

Spotlight on Databases: Ancestry Library Edition

by Barbara Leden, Librarian

If you want to do research on your family tree, take a look at Ancestry Library Edition (ALE). This database offers many of the same record collections available on Ancestry.com's subscription database, but it's free to anyone with a valid Library card. In any Library location, log in to our computers or use your own mobile device to access the Library homepage. Navigate to the database section and click on Ancestry Library Edition to access a plethora of records that just might shed some light on your family's past.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Search over 262,000,000 obituaries from Newspapers.com
This means you're connected through the Library's subscription.
Searching for that right moment
Start searching billions of records and discover your family's story.
Begin Searching
Narrow your search to specific categories.
Jump straight to the basic search form to search all records.
SEARCH CENSUS
Find ancestors in the complete set of U.S. Federal Census images from 1790-1940, including name indexes.
Search Now
SEARCH VITALS
When did those significant life changing events happen in your ancestors life? Search our Vital Records to find out.
Search Now
SEARCH MILITARY
Did your ancestors serve in the Military? Our collection of military records holds the answers.
Search Now
SEARCH IMMIGRATION
When did your ancestors arrive in the U.S.? And how did they get here? Search our passenger lists and other immigration records to learn more.

In addition to the Home page option on the main navigation bar (top), ALE includes Search, Message Boards, Learning Center, Charts and Forms, and New Collections. The interface offers a variety of ways to select and filter record collections to help find the information you need. Message Boards is an online genealogy community where participants can share information. The Learning Center provides research tips and tricks to help get you going in the right direction. To keep track of the information you find and organize your research, Charts and Forms provides a variety of downloadable forms. Lastly, New Collections highlights recently added collections, indicates which have been updated, and also shows a list of all record collections.

If you're looking for a specific record such as a census or birth record, you can start by searching just in those categories by following the links on the home page. Clicking on the Search option in the main navigation bar leads to a search page that includes further record collection options such as Military; Schools, Directories & Church Histories; and Tax, Criminal Land & Wills. Another category is Reference, Dictionaries & Almanacs, which includes Stories & Publications and Photos & Maps.

The Card Catalog option is an excellent tool that will let you search and find specific individual record collections to focus your search. Enter geographical locations in the title search box to discover records from specific areas. The list of all record collections can be sorted alphabetically by title, date added, date updated, and record count.

Enjoy your genealogy with the help of Ancestry Library Edition. You never know what you'll find!

We would like to thank the following for their generous contributions:

James L. Cargal for *Reflections on 100 years of Akron City Hospital*

Downton Akron Partnership for complete collection of First Night posters

Bernard G. Factor III for basketball banquet programs from Central High School, 1946-1952, and Summit County Softball Hall of Fame books and posters, 2018

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church for 100th and 150th anniversary publications

Rose (Dobson) Housley for photographs of local tire company and various historic booklets

Robert Koch for information sheets, newsletters and various other documents, U.S. Naval Air Station, Akron, 1950s

Jeanne Kolva for WCUE Radio Charts, 1971-1981

Jean Kreyche for framed portrait of Selah Norton, early Summit County settler

Leadership Akron for organizational archives including books, scrapbooks, videos, documents, and photographs

Toula Detorakis Lefter for Pancretan Association of America 43rd National Convention yearbook, 2013

Master Singers Chorale of Northeast Ohio for music program CDs and printed programs, 2001-2019

Carol Meyers for *Cuyahoga Portage Chapter: Celebrating 120 Years of Serving God, Home, and Country 1897-2017*

Mark J. Price for *Akron Beacon Journal* employee photographs, negatives, newsletters, retirement letters, and media report books, 1928-1939

Russell Sibert for various items including pamphlets and DVDs from the Chapel and Akron Baptist Temple

Phil Sutton for materials about Fred Stone, early commercial photographer in Akron

Johnie's
HOUSE OF BEAUTY
CORNER OF WILDWOOD
717 COPLEY RD....
762-4098
IF NO ANSWER CALL 535-0731
AKRON'S FINEST & MODERN BEAUTY ESTABLISHMENT
The modern beauty shop with the up to date hair styles see our London SHAG HAIR CUT.
Specializing in permanents and Hair Relaxers of all types.
Also hair cutting and conditioners 10% off on Perms. Mon. & Wed.

Akron beautician and entrepreneur Johnie Barham Brown opened Johnie's House of Beauty in the early 1960s, remaining in business for over 35 years. She died in 2016 at age 94. The Reporter*, January 2-9, 1971.*

The Akron-Summit County Public Library
Special Collections Division
is located on the third floor
of the Main Library.

Special Collections
Akron-Summit County Public Library
60 S. High St.
Akron, Ohio 44326

330-643-9030

email:
speccollections@akronlibrary.org

website:
www.akronlibrary.org/specialcollections

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Special Collections Division
Akron-Summit County Public Library
60 South High Street
Akron, Ohio 44326